

WASHINGTON – Today, at an oversight hearing of the Library of Congress, Members of the Committee on House Administration questioned officials on the Library's operations, including significant gaps in its inventory management plan. The oversight hearing, led by Chairman Robert Brady, D-Pa., and Ranking Republican Vern Ehlers, R-Mich., focused on the March 2007 Inspector General's survey that reported approximately 17% of the Library's inventory was unable to be located at any given time.

In his opening remarks, Ehlers warned the Librarian, James Billington, about the sobering consequences of failing to complete inventory. **"With thousands of new items being shelved each day by Library employees, this is a problem that is growing rapidly," Ehlers noted. "Without a completed inventory, the nation's most prestigious library is in danger of becoming little more than a neglected storage facility, rather than the standard setter for best practices in collections administration."**

According to a March 2007 survey conducted by the Library's Inspector General, Karl W. Schornagel, the Library's Collection, Access, Loan and Management Division (CALM) is currently unable to account for 17 percent of the requested inventory. Library officials who testified before the Committee claim that subsequent inventory reviews had found the percentage of unaccounted for items to be closer to 10 percent. Associate Librarian for Library Services, Dr. Deanna Marcum, indicated that the completion of the Library's Baseline Inventory Project (BIP), an inventory initiative launched in 2002, will allow the Library to determine that status of the approximately 13.5 million items in question.

Skeptical of the Library's inventory project that has been ongoing for the past 5 years, Committee member Dan Lungren, R-Calif., suggested that the Library consider modeling their tracking system after successful tracking programs within the private sector. "If UPS can track tens of thousands if not millions of pieces per day, and doesn't have a lost rate of 10 percent, why can't you?" Lungren asked. "I would bet you that if UPS or any of the others had a loss rate of 10 percent, they would be out of business."

For more information, please contact the Committee press office at (202) 225-8281.

